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NORMAN MAILER'S "AMERICAN DREAM"

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Norman Mailer's "American Dream", submitted by William John Cook in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I propose to discuss the significance of Norman Mailer's movement from the social realism of The Naked and the Dead to the visionary qualities of An American Dream. In Chapter I the power of Mailer's language and its influence on the reader will be considered as well as the social circumstances in which such a language germinates. In Chapter II we will examine the hero-hipster as he appears in the two novels, Barbary Shore and The Deer Park. This study of the hipster, whose language is one of violence, introduces the third chapter in which we will be concerned with the dynamic theory of Time as it relates to the nature of the hipster's perception and his experience of his world. Chapter IV will be devoted to a discussion of the vision of Norman Mailer and how his vision is a product of his use of language and time. This last chapter will, in fact, show how the language of violence becomes a visionary reality. Thus, the movement of this thesis is from the word to the flesh.





## INTRODUCTION

The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse toward the pursuit of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Norman Mailer leads us through a world of violence and sexuality in a mythic search for the Devil. His treacherous path winds from the microcosmic, war-infested island of The Naked and the Dead, through the streets and deserts of America, and, finally into the heart and mind of man. It is an attempt to follow Mailer along this route that gives direction to this thesis. Not by following the navigation points charted by an exegesis of the individual novels do we arrive at the edge of the abyss. Rather, we must follow the mind of Mailer into the dark hovels of ideas which appear on the journey.

Thus, this thesis is not an analysis of the individual works nor is it a thematic study of all the works. Because the motivation of this study is a desire to stand with Mailer on the precipice of the abyss, to go as far as he will take me, the movement of the thesis is from language to vision. This movement involves a progression from a consideration of Mailer's language to a discussion of the hero Mailer discovers to be the man who speaks this language and who will





eventually be the "seed-carrier" of his vision. The hipster, whose world is examined in Barbary Shore and The Deer Park, speaks the violent words of murder and searches his own body for the apocalypse. In this chapter we follow Mailer as he seeks to know how the hipster sees and how he searches. Time, as theory and as dimension, is explored by Mailer for the key to the final passage of the labyrinth. What Mailer discovers is that in the concept of Time as dynamic and not passive force there exists the moment of awareness of the self. So in the fourth novel, An American Dream, Mailer excites Time with murder and violent sexuality and finds that these climactic moments in the chronology of Time dynamic drive him towards the Devil and God and, ultimately, towards the depths of his own being.

That Mailer is a novelist in the American tradition is not my concern in this thesis. My concern is, rather, with the integrity of Mailer. Says George Steiner, "Norman Mailer is among the honest men. He strives to know, at the peril of moral chaos, what it is that has been loosed upon the world and whether art can cope with it."<sup>2</sup> In his striving to the extremity of existence Mailer carries the burden of our minds, towards our own abyss where we must confront the nature of our own being. Mailer realizes the sanctity of his task:

I've come to the middle-aged conclusion that I'm probably better as a writer than a man of action. Too bad. Still it's no little matter to be a writer. There's that Godawful Time Magazine world out there, and one can make raids on it.



There are palaces, and prisons to attack. One can even succeed now and again in blowing holes in the line of the world's communications. Sometimes I feel as if there's a vast guerilla war going on for the mind of man, communist against communist, capitalist against capitalist, artist against artist. And the stakes are huge. Will we spoil the best secrets of life or will we help to free a new kind of man? It's intoxicating to think of that. There's something rich waiting if one of us is brave enough and good enough to get there. <sup>3</sup>  
 (Cannibals and Christians, 221)

The writer who is willing to risk his sanity and his very existence in the pursuit of the mind of man deserves something more than intellectual detachment. He deserves the honesty which comes only from the involvement of all the senses of the reader in the "contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting." Surely it is holy duty of the critic to avoid the creation of defence barriers between his own mind and the forces of the artist:

The critic lives at second hand. He writes about. The poem, the novel, or the play must be given to him; criticism exists by the grace of other men's genius. . . . The true critic is servant to the poet; today he is acting as master, or being taken as such. He omits Zarathustra's last, most vital lesson: "now, do without me."<sup>4</sup>





## CHAPTER I

### THE LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE

#### i

Theft is a criminal act which is derealized into a dream, whereas a work of art is a dream of murder which is realized by an act.<sup>1</sup>

There is a language of violence. It is a language of images in which the images become a reality themselves. The word becomes flesh and the dream of crime becomes the criminal act:

Hitler heard inside his native tongue the latent hysteria, the confusion, the quality of hypnotic trance. He plunged unerringly into the undergrowth of language, into those zones of darkness and outcry which are the infancy of articulate speech, and which come before words have grown mellow and provisional to the touch of the mind. . . . And instead of turning away in nauseated disbelief, the German people gave massive echo to the man's bellowings. It bellowed back out of a million throats and smashed-down boots. A Hitler would have found reservoirs of venom and moral illiteracy in any language. But by virtue of recent history, they were nowhere else so ready and so near the very surface of common speech. A language in which one can write a<sub>2</sub>"Horst Wessel Lied" is ready to give hell a native tongue.

Sarte's Saint Genet is an essay about art as crime. It is, so to speak, written in the language of the language of murder. But Mailer, like Genet himself, writes the original



language of violence. Both Genet and Mailer, in fact, believe in a kind of enforced existentialism in which "the only trust is the trust with which we throw ourselves into the abyss,"<sup>3</sup> and the experience of reading either of them or indeed any "visionary of violence" takes the reader to the very edge of his own abyss.

The process by which the writer draws his audience towards the edge of vastness and mystery is described by Sartre as a spectral sacrament. The word, which is the dream of crime, becomes flesh in the psyche of the reader:

A "beautiful" murder breaks through the police barrier, installs itself in the consciousness of honest folk, violates it, fills it with horror and giddiness. . . . The criminal kills; he is a poem; the poet writes the crime; he constructs a wild object that infects all minds with criminality; since it is the specter of the murder, even more than the murder itself, that horrifies people and unlooses base instincts.<sup>4</sup>

To live with a dream of murder is to live with the knowledge that one is forcing one's being to that extremity of existence where man with all nerves exposed confronts death and life. "In the destructive element immerse,"<sup>5</sup> says Stein in Conrad's Lord Jim. And in The Deer Park Mailer relates this basic existentialist concept to morality:

The essence of spirit, he [Eitel] thought to himself, was to choose the thing which did not better one's position but made it more perilous. That was why the world he knew was poor, for it insisted morality and caution were identical. (The Deer Park, 220)<sup>6</sup>

Mailer's claim is that there is a greater morality than the one based on the desire for self-preservation. Indeed, if we were to see his novels only from the perspective of a







cautious morality we would have to burn his books for their immorality. Concerning himself with extreme situations and criminal action, the novelist forces the reader beyond caution to consider new possibilities, the possibility, for example, that there is a morality which is subversive and even murderous:

Every fury on earth has been absorbed in time, as art, or as religion, or as authority in one form or another. The deadliest blow the enemy of the human soul can strike is to do fury honor. Swift, Blake, Beethoven, Christ, Joyce, Kafka, name me a one who has not been thus castrated. Official acceptance is the one unmistakable symptom that salvation is beaten again, and is the one surest sign of fatal misunderstanding, and is the kiss of Judas.<sup>7</sup>

Like the reader who has been infected by the language of violence, Rojack, the hero of An American Dream, is haunted by the memory of war, death, and the worlds which lie beyond:

Where many another young athlete or hero might have had a vast and continuing recreation with sex, I was lost in a private kaleidoscope of death. I could not forget the fourth soldier. His eyes had come to see what was waiting on the other side, and they told me then that death was a creation more dangerous than life. I could have had a career in politics if only I had been able to think that death was zero, death was everyone's emptiness. (An American Dream, 7)<sup>8</sup>

What are but memories and dreams for Rojack become the reality of violence much as the words of violence fester in the body and psyche of the reader until they are released. The image of the cancerous body permeates Norman Mailer's writing but it is at the end of An American Dream that he relates it specifically to the morality which leads one to the abyss:

In some, madness must come in with breath, mill through the blood and be breathed out again. In some it goes up to the mind. Some take the madness and stop it with discipline. Madness is locked beneath. It goes into tissues, is swallow-





ed by the cells. The cells go mad. Cancer is their flag. Cancer is the growth of madness denied.

(An American Dream, 267)

Confronted by the realization that violence is in the self, says Mailer, man must either contain this violence and go mad or express it in the language of murder on the reality of violent action.

The use of extreme language is accompanied by a peculiar "visionary" feeling, a feeling that finds expression in the images of possession, haunting, and madness in An American Dream. The previously quoted passage from Sartre's Saint Genet suggests that criminal language has the power to "derealize." The language of Mailer is, then, by definition one which leads inevitably to a dream vision, an "American dream," in which madness is not denied but is encountered. And the final vision is of the self, the psychopath one encounters in a dream of violence which is the abyss.

In Mailer's journey to the abyss of self-awareness he attempts to re-create in the reader the violence of his language, but he makes it clear that it is the attitude we take towards violence which is important. He does not give to Hitler the accolade of crown-prince of violence. Rather he is concerned that man face the nature of his own being and the violence that is there:

Murder, after all, has exhilaration within it. I do not mean it is a state to entertain; the tension which develops in your body makes me sicken over a period, and I had my fill of walking about with a chest full of hatred and a brain jammed to burst, but there is something manly about containing your rage, it is so difficult, it is like carrying a two-hun-





dred-pound safe up a cast-iron hill. The exhilaration comes I suppose from possessing such strength.

(An American Dream, 8)

To drag the reader to the point of the highest tension is Mailer's ultimate purpose as a writer. When we consider Mailer's use of the language we have to see him not simply as a man of ideas whose words can be accepted or rejected by rational argument. Commenting on the novels of Günter Grass, George Steiner presents us with an image like the one we have found in Mailer: the language of violence is the "indispensable tactlessness" of the writer as subversive:

In his two major novels Grass has had the nerve, the indispensable tactlessness to evoke the past. By force of his macabre, often obscene wit, he has rubbed the noses of his readers in the great filth, in the vomit of their time. Like no other writer, he has mocked and subverted the bland oblivion, the self-acquittal which underlie Germany's material resurgence. Much of what is active conscience in the Germany of Krupp and the Munich beer halls lies in this man's ribald keeping.<sup>9</sup>

The German people must look back upon the lime pits and gas ovens in the same way that Rojack must look back and face directly his experience of war. The reader of Mailer must face the violence of An American Dream and the words which become flesh in his mind. He must be prepared for the bludgeoning of his psyche and beliefs with words which, themselves, stretch back to the pit of infinity.

The violence of An American Dream is in one very real sense a "naked lunch," to use William Burroughs's words. It is "a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork."<sup>10</sup> Mailer turns the tranquillizing newspaper





reports of violence into a vision. The murder of Deborah and the subsequent encounters with both heaven and hell are not pills of fact to be taken during breakfast. Mailer writes of the "naked lunch" when the assailant and the victim stare into each other's eyes:

I fired at him and he went down and I never knew where it hit nor quite saw his face; then the last stood up straight with a bayonet in his hand and invited me to advance. He was bleeding below his belt. Neat and clean was his shirt, level the line of his helmet, and nothing but blood and carnage below the belt. I started to rise. I wanted to charge as if that were our contract, and held, for I could not face his eyes, they now contained all of it, the two grenades, the blood on my thigh, the fat faggot, the ghost with the pistol, the hunchback, the blood, those bloody screams that never sounded, it was all in his eyes, he had eyes I was to see once later on an autopsy table in a small town in Missouri, eyes belonging to a red-neck farmer from a deep road in the Ozarks, eyes of blue, so perfectly blue and mad they go all the way in deep into celestial vaults of sky, eyes which go all the way to God.

(An American Dream, 5)

At the end of the novel Rojack must confront the eye of his wife which becomes his eye in the same way that the eye of the German contains all his being as it is defined by the war. Violence that drives one to the extremity of the self leads to an extreme awareness of the meaning of existence. In his use of the language of violence Mailer first confronts one with the nature of being; then he confronts the reader with an awareness of a cautionless morality, with the knowledge "that death was a creation more dangerous than life."

Mailer's use of the language of violence is closely related to the sexuality which pervades most of his works.<sup>11</sup> We have seen how Mailer attempts to force the reader to the limits of his being by arousing in him the awareness of the





murderous instincts in his nature. Like violence, sex also turns man back upon himself to confront the vastness of the abyss before him. Like violence, the sex act is a totally individual action in which only the resources of a man's being are of any relevance. Only in the individuality and the isolation of sex and murder does man confront his own destiny:

Nothing was loving in her; no love in me; we paid our devotions in some church no larger than ourselves, we met in some depth beneath the lights and salts of one's eyes and mind.  
(An American Dream, 127)

In the act of sex man's life enters the world but he enters with the fore-knowledge of his coming death. The woman will kill the man in an act which is as violent and passionate as the murder of one man by another. The woman, herself, is speared by the man and in the violence done by each to the other both die in spasms of awareness. The sexual act, as described by Mailer, is a metaphor of murder:

So my rage came back, and my rhythm no longer depended on her drive, but it found its own life, and we made love like two club fighters in an open exchange, neither giving ground, rhythm to rhythm, even to even, hypnotic, knowing neither the pain of punishment nor the pride of pleasure, and the equality of this, as hollow as the beat of the drum, seemed to carry her into some deep of desire, and I had broken through, she was following me, her muscular body writhed all about me with an impersonal abandon, the wanton whip-thrash of a wounded snake, she was on fire and frozen at the same time, and then her mouth was kissing me with a rubbery greedy compulsion so avid to use all there was of me, that to my distant surprise, not in character for the saint to slip to the brutal, my hand came up and clipped her mean and openhanded across the face . . .

(Advertisements, 439)<sup>12</sup>

If we compare this passage with the long description of the





murder of Deborah in An American Dream and its image of the struggle to open the doors to a vision of heaven we see that the metaphor goes both ways: murder is a metaphor of sexual assault. The violence of sexuality is the sexuality of violence.

To take another example. The kind of relationship between Cherry and Rojack in An American Dream is based on a violent struggle in the mind of Rojack:

I did not go on to say that when I was in bed with a woman, I rarely felt as if I were making life, but rather as if I were a pirate sharpening up a raid on life, and so somewhere inside myself - yes, there was a large part of the fear - I had dread of the judgement which must rest behind the womb of a woman.

(An American Dream, 119)

The castration complex revealed in this passage results from his sexual encounters with his wife:

She was a great bitch, Deborah, a lioness of the species: unconditional surrender was her only raw meat. A Great Bitch has losses to calculate after all if the gent gets away. For ideally a Great Bitch delivers extermination to any bucko brave enough to take carnal knowledge of her.

(An American Dream, 9)

Implicit in these two quotations is the principle of violent sexuality that is characteristic of all the meetings of men and women in Mailer's work. Lovers carry with them to their mating ground the roles of the soldier or the frenzied animal or the scarred boxer:

I was a primitive for a prime minute, a gorged gouge of a working-class phallus, eager to ram into all her nasty little tensions. I had the message again, I was one of the millions on the bottom who had the muscles to move the sex which kept the world alive, and I would grind it into her, the healthy hearted inches and the sweat of the cost of acquired





culture when you started low and wanted to go high.  
 (Advertisements, 437)

This retreat to the primitive that is suggested by the violence and the sexuality of the novels is another expression of Mailer's purpose as an artist in society. George Steiner praises Mailer's intellectual honesty in these words:

From the outset, Mailer has wanted to write "the big one," the novel or tract which would change men's social and moral existence. He is out "to trap the Prince of Truth" in order to direct the times towards a re-birth of the psyche.<sup>13</sup>

To be honest, to be subversive, to be moral--this is Mailer's code as a writer. His language is a guerrilla-like attack on the moral conventions of his society and in many ways this attack is as sexual as the violence in his vision. If we were to ask for an analogy of Mailer's relationship with his reader it could be found in any of the violently sexual passages in the novels. Perhaps the reader, like Ruta in An American Dream, shouts "Verboten!" when Mailer is revolting, in the true sense of that word. But the attack never weakens and Mailer, like Rojack, continues to pound the psyche of the morally cautious reader:

So that was how I finally made love to her, a minute for one, a minute for the other, a raid on the Devil and a trip back to the Lord, I was like a hound who has broken free of the pack and is going to get that fox himself, I was drunk with my choice, she was becoming mine as no woman ever had, she wanted no more than to be part of my will, her face, that mobile, mocking, know-the-cost-of-every-bargain Berlin face, was loose and independent of her now, swimming through expressions, a greedy mate with the taste of power in her eyes and her mouth, that woman's look that the world is theirs, and then I was travelling up again that crucial few centimeters of distance from the end to the beginning, I was again in the place where the child is made, and a little look





of woe was on her face, a puckered fearful little nine-year-old afraid of her punishment, wishing to be good.

(An American Dream, 45)

This passage is both a brutal, murderous exposure of the body of man and a declaration of the type of relationship Mailer has with his reader. Mailer violates yet he is moral. His language of violence may be criminal yet his relation with his reader finds its origins in love that does not protect but reveals to the loved one the body of man.

# 11

At this point it is of some interest to examine the social situation in which a writer of the language of violence exists. Earlier in this chapter we referred to Günter Grass's depiction of German society under Hitler's influence. We saw that the genius of Grass was his refusal to turn his eyes away from the sickness of the past. Like Grass, Mailer also finds his genius in his ability to look at the nature of his society and the people who live in that society. I do not mean to suggest that Mailer's importance as a writer is primarily in his social criticism, but it is important to see his writings in the context of his time even if only to point to another possible interpretation of his concerns.

The Naked and the Dead is a brilliant first novel in which Mailer describes, among other things, the environment out of which he developed his language of violence and his concept of the hipster. This first novel is literally about





war and the effect of war on the minds and bodies of citizen-soldiers:

The harsh slapping sound came out of the jungle and was followed by another discharge and another and another. That's the mortars, he [Hennessey] thought, and decided he was catching on fast. And then he heard a screaming piercing sound almost overhead like the tearing squeals of a car braking to avoid a crash. Instinctively he curled flat in his hole. The next instants were lost to him. He heard an awful exploding sound which seemed to fill every corner of his mind, and the earth shook and quivered underneath him in the hole. Numbly he felt dirt flying over him, and his body being pounded by some blast. The explosion came again, and the dirt and the shock, and then another and another blast. He found himself sobbing in the hole, terrified and resentful. When another mortar landed, he screamed out like a child, "That's enough, that's enough!" He lay there trembling for almost a minute after the shells had stopped. His thighs felt hot and wet, and at first he thought, I'm wounded. It was pleasant and peaceful, and he had a misty picture of a hospital bed. He moved his hand back, and realized with both revulsion and mirth that he had emptied his bowels. (The Naked and the Dead, 33)<sup>14</sup>

The overwhelming fact of this environment is the nearness of death. It is what the soldier must face every single moment of the day; nowhere on the island are the men able to exist without the thought that at any moment they may be the target of an enemy sniper. During the souvenir hunt among the Japanese bodies the reality of death is brought home to Red Valsen when he sees a corpse contorted by the savagery of its death:

Very deep inside himself he was thinking that this was a man who had once wanted things, and the thought of his own death was always a little unbelievable to him. The man had had a childhood, a youth and a young manhood, and there had been dreams and memories. Red was realizing with surprise and shock, as if he were looking at a corpse for the first time, that a man was really a very fragile thing. . . . It was the smell he would have expected if he had lifted a coffin lid, and it remained in him for a long bad moment in which he





looked at the body and didn't look, thought of nothing, and found his mind churning with the physical knowledge of life and death and his own vulnerability.

(The Naked and the Dead, 171)

This is not the only death that threatens the soldier in war. General Cummings reveals one of the basic beliefs of the omnipotent authorities who run the Army with an end-justifies-the-means concept of power. To the soldier the enemy contracts to deal death to his body, but the Army promises him a less quick death by suffocation. Mailer is to call this "death by the state as l'univers concentrationnaire" in his article, "The White Negro" (Advertisements, 304).

Says General Cummings of this power:

"In the Army the idea of individual personality is just a hindrance. Sure, there are differences among men in any particular Army unit, but they invariably cancel each other out, and what you're left with is a value rating. Such and such a company is good or poor, effective or ineffective for such or such a mission. I work with grosser techniques, common denominator techniques."

(The Naked and the Dead, 143)

A third kind of death is implied in the novel. It is death by frustration, the slow death of conformity and loss of individuality, in the face of the massive power of the social structure:

Hearn sighed, went out to the rail again. And all the bright young people of his youth had butted their heads, smashed against things until they got weaker and the things still stood.

A bunch of dispossessed . . . from the raucous stricken bosom of America. (The Naked and the Dead, 278)

It makes little difference to the individual in which of the three ways he dies for each is a castration and an annihilation of the self.





Cummings' political prophecy offers no respite for individualism. The energy of war will propel the right wing elements in the country into a time of tremendous power. Tyranny of the government will replace tyranny of the Army but the death to the self will be the same:

History was in the grasp of the Right, and after the war their political campaigns would be intense. One big push, one big offensive, and history was theirs for this century, perhaps the next one. The League of Omnipotent Men.

(The Naked and the Dead, 308)

In the face of this threat posed by all the aspects of the environment the individual must, for his own preservation, adapt to the environment of perpetual threat without giving in to the pressures exerted by external forces. In his controversial article "The White Negro" Mailer sums up the reaction of the individual to the violence which is so much a part of the legal, social world:

It is on this bleak scene that a phenomenon has appeared: the American existentialist - the hipster, the man who knows that if our collective condition is to live with instant death by atomic war, relatively quick death by the State as l'univers concentrationnaire, or with a slow death by conformity with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled . . . , if the fate of the twentieth-century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence, why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self.

(Advertisements, 304)

It is not surprising that the language of the hipster becomes the language of violence in the light of the experience which has given birth to his self-definition. Violence has coloured every aspect of his existence and in the face of the





violence which exists in the basic motives of his society he speaks the language of murder. He is not a symptom of his times. Rather he is an outsider, a Negro, speaking to the dream world of the violence which is hidden in the dark sub-conscious of his society.

Mailer's concern with death in the American society puts him in the company of such writers of the language of violence as Genet and Burroughs. There are, however, three features of the social conditions which add a uniqueness to Mailer's writing. Each feature is related to an image which pervades all of Mailer's work - the image of the plague. Mailer is explicit in his discussion of the plague in his recently published collection of essays, Cannibals and Christians:

It has been the continuing obsession of this writer that the world is entering a time of plague. And the continuing metaphor for this obsession - a most disagreeable metaphor - has been cancer. The argument is old by now: its first assumption is that cancer is a disease different from other diseases, an ultimate disease against which all other diseases are in design to protect us.

The difficulty - for one can always convince the literary world to accept a metaphor iff one remains loyal to it - is that my obsession is not merely an obsession, I fear, but insight into the nature of things, perhaps the deepest insight I have, and this said with no innocence of the knowledge that the plague can have its home within, and these condemnations come to no more than the grapplings of a man with a curse on his flesh, or even the probability that society partakes of the plague and its critic partakes, and each wars against the other, the man and the society each grappling with his own piece of the plague, as if, indeed, we are each of us born not only with our life but with our death, with our variety of death, good death and bad, and it is the act of each separate man to look to free himself from that part of his existence which was born with the plague. (Cannibals and Christians, 2-3)





Through the image of the plague each of the features which makes Mailer's language of violence both traditional and unique is related.

William Burroughs' Naked Lunch contains an insight into the first of the three features. Burroughs perceives that law is crime and that the policeman and the addict need each other to perpetuate the cycle of the symbiotic relationship:

The President is a junkie but he can't take it direct because of his position. So he gets fixed through me. . . . From time to time we make contact, and I recharge him. These contacts look, to the casual observer, like homosexual practices, but the actual excitement is not primarily sexual, and the climax is the separation when the recharge is completed.<sup>15</sup>

Control, the form of social rule in a tyrannical society, feeds on the criminal like a cannibal. Just as Orwell's state perpetuates war, this cannibalistic state perpetuates crime and violence:

So they are the Cannibals - they believe that survival and health of the species comes from consuming one's own, not one's near own, but one's own species. So the pure cannibal has only one taboo on food - he will not eat the meat of his own family. Other men he will of course consume. Their virtues he will conserve in his own flesh, their vices he will excrete, but to kill and to eliminate is his sense of human continuation. (Cannibals and Christians, 4)

A closely related point is the one which Marshall McLuhan makes about criminal society in his essay, "Bogart Hero":

The gangster world reflects the forms and tensions of the average social pattern. Thus, Life (November 29, 1948) reviews the Chicago Capone crowd as a group of energetic and talented men, who, but for the fates, might have been pillars





of the board of trade. Respectability pays. Crime doesn't pay. That is the main difference between the two spheres. As for the arbitrary and precarious place one occupies in the respectable world or the gang world, that is a matter of calculated risks. But whereas the tycoon risks his money, the gangster risks his life.<sup>16</sup>

Both gangster and hipster, one with violence and the other with the language of violence, accept the ultimate gamble. Both are on their way to confront the abyss of their own self. The hipster may be the greatest criminal - for he takes us along with him.

General Cummings' political prophecies in The Naked and the Dead reveal a second distinguishing feature of Mailer's language of violence. Again, it is based in social awareness. George Orwell's 1984 is a novel about new technology and as such it is a fore-runner of Cummings' philosophy. In this novel Orwell sees the new technology as a new method of control and a means to Utopia. But paradox exists in the fact that control is the means by which the achieving of paradise can be forever prevented. Cummings, in his prophecy, is less paradoxical and more ironic:

"There are countries which have latent powers, latent resources, they are full of potential energy, so to speak. And there are great concepts which can unlock that, express it. As kinetic energy a country is organization, co-ordinated effort, your epithet, fascism. . . . Historically the purpose of this war is to translate America's potential into kinetic energy. . . . For the past century the entire historical process has been working toward greater and greater consolidation of power. Physical power for this century, an extension of our universe, and a political power, a political organization to make it possible."

(The Naked and the Dead, 254)

The encroachment of power, the imposition of a coun-





try's destiny on the individual--these are forms of defacement. All stem from the social circumstances of the age in which Mailer writes. Mailer's language of violence is the language of attack against these forms of social strangulation of the individual. But as Steiner says of Hitler in the passage quoted earlier this language is not created in the vacuum of the writer's mind. It is a language which exists in the sub-basement of culture. Mailer's violent vision does not thrive in opposition to civilization but rather finds its energy in the depths of his own cultural heritage:

We cannot pretend that Belsen is irrelevant to the responsible life of the imagination. What man has inflicted on man in recent time, has affected the writer's primary material - the sum and potential of human behavior - and it presses on the brain with a new darkness.

Moreover, it puts in question the primary concepts of a literary, humanistic culture. The ultimate of political barbarism grew from the core of Europe. Two centuries after Voltaire had proclaimed its end, torture again became a normal process of political action. Not only did the general dissemination of literary, cultural values prove no barrier to totalitarianism; but in notable instances the high places of humanistic learning and art actually welcomed and aided the new terror. Barbarism prevailed on the very ground of Christian humanism, of Renaissance culture and classic rationalism. We know that some of the men who devised and administered Auschwitz had been taught to read Shakespeare and Goethe, and continued to do so.<sup>17</sup>

Steiner perceives that the new violence was bred in the soil of humanism itself. In Cannibals and Christians Mailer makes the point that civilization itself is barbarous. His language is the language of the darkness of this society. A question put to him while on board a new jet prods Mailer's mind into an awareness of the death that is present even in the mater-





ials which pervade his society in the semblance of a structure:

"Why is it," he asked, "that all the new stuff you build here, including the interior furnishings of this airplane, looks like a child's nursery?"

And that is what it was. The inside of our airplane was like a child's plastic nursery, a dayroom in the children's ward, and if I had been Quentin Compson, I might have answered, "Because we want to go back, because the nerves grew in all the wrong ways. Because we developed habits which are suffocating us to death. I tell you, man, we do it because we're sick, we're a sick nation, we're sick to the edge of vomit and so we build our lives with materials which smell like vomit, polyethylene and bakelite and fiberglas and styrene. . . . Maybe we were always sick, maybe the Puritans carried the virus and were so odious the British were right to drive them out, maybe we're a nation of culls and weeds and half-crazy from the start."

Nobody of course was Quentin Compson, nobody spoke that way any more, but the question was posed by a ghost and so had to linger: was there indeed a death in the seed which brought us here? was the country extraordinary or accursed, a junkyard where even the minnows gave caviar in the filthy pond in the fierce electric American night?

(Cannibals and Christians, 8)

The control which is implicit in the policeman-addict relationship, the power of the new technology, and the death which permeates the structure of humanism are the landmarks in the plastic society on which the hipster takes his bearings.





## CHAPTER II

### THE HIPSTER

Seed is an end, it is an end of the potentialities seen for oneself, and every organism creates its seed out of the experience of its past and its unspoken vision or curse upon the future. (Advertisements, 302)

Standing in the dynamic area that exists between violence and time the hipster is the "philosophical psychopath" who has grown out of the jungles and the mud of The Naked and the Dead. His psyche is revealed in Barbary Shore but it is primarily in The Deer Park and An American Dream that the hipster begins to blossom as the sex-violence force in Mailer's mythic search for an American hero.

What and where is the point at which the hipster stands between violence and time? It is in the attempt to answer this question that Norman Mailer is led toward the images and themes which are the subject of this chapter: the meaning of historically determined lives which have no history, the paradox of an "enormous present" which is a primitive past, or a fantasy which is a reality, the nature of the artist as a historian of the present, and the nature of such an artist's perception and experience.





Mailer's most explicit depiction of the hipster is his now famous essay, "The White Negro", and it may well serve as a point of departure for our discussion. In "The White Negro" Mailer assumes the role of the literary botanist to examine the basic life force of this hero, the hipster, the seed, "the nucleus of a new imagination". Mailer looks first to the earth which fed the new life:

Knowing in the cells of his existence that life was war, nothing but war the Negro (all exceptions admitted) could rarely afford the sophisticated inhibitions of civilization, and so he kept for his survival the art of the primitive, he lived in the enormous present, he subsisted for his Saturday night kicks, relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to the character and quality of his existence, to his rage and the infinite variations of joy, lust, languor, growl, cramp, pinch, scream and despair of his orgasm. (Advertisements, 306)

What the Negro has always found to be real becomes a new chaotic landscape for the white American who learns that in war the naked lover and the dead are but images of himself. As the lover groans and writhes so do the dying: the form of existence of the white American, General Cummings tells us, is like the curve of a death missile, a trajectory of violence:

What is this curve? It is the fundamental path of any projectile, of a ball, a stone, an arrow (Nietzsche's arrow of longing) or of an artillery shell. It is the curve of the death missile as well as an abstraction of the life-love impulse; it demonstrates the form of existence, and life and death are merely different points of observation on the same trajectory. (The Naked and the Dead, 443)

With the end of the war the exposed men come "home" again. But in one very real sense the white American can never re-





turn to his home after the experience of the Second World War. Instead he returns to Harlem where, after all, every American white has wanted to live since the days of Huckleberry Finn. For the white man Harlem is, on the one hand, the last bastion of the noble savage where Nigger Jim still takes Huck to his black breast. Yet, on the other hand, Harlem is the dark, brawling, violent, sexual id of white America. It is the white dream world in which hulking Negro boxers and stevedores act out white desires and guilts by raping the pure, white Americans. During the war the American male felt the passions and lived the violent life of the Negro. Both white men and Negroes fought in the war, but for the Negro this was not a new experience but rather a continuation of a life he had been living; there was no armistice for the Negro and the war persisted when he returned home to Harlem or to those other Harlems which exist in countless other cities in the United States. The Negro remained a Negro but the war redefined a small group of whites. The process by which history deprives men of their history is treated symbolically in Barbary Shore, but the consequences of this process are of equal interest and must concern us here too.

The narrator of Barbary Shore, Mikey Lovett, is a new man who begins his account with the words "Probably I was in the war." He then goes on to tell or, rather, to fantasize about the experience which re-created him:





There was a time when I would try rather frantically to recall what kind of accident it had been and where it had occurred. I could almost picture the crash of an airplane and the flames entering my cockpit. No sooner had I succeeded, however, than the airplane became a tank and I was trapped within, only to create another environment; the house was burning and a timber pinned my back. Such violence ends with the banality of beads; grenades, shell, bombardment - I can elaborate a hundred such, and none seem correct.

(Barbary Shore, 3)<sup>1</sup>

"None [may] seem correct" but the scars on his back and head indicate that Mikey Lovett was "reborn" in a state of violence with a plastic surgeon as creator. However, the plastic surgery is not finished for the doctor should have known that Lovett's white skin was the wrong colour, for he is, in Mailer's terms, a Negro. He is one of the redefined men whom Mailer calls "the hipsters",

a new breed of adventurers, urban adventurers who drifted out at night looking for action with a black man's code to fit their facts. The hipster had absorbed the existentialist synapses of the Negro, and for practical purposes could be considered a white Negro. (Advertisements, 306)

The hipster has absorbed the energy and the passion of the war environment and united it with the culture and experience of the Negro. His accepted task is to express the violence of his passions in a society which has always frustrated the individual's assertion. Mailer uses the image of marriage to describe this process and to imply all the possible definitions of the hipster:

In such places as Greenwich Village a menage-a-trois was completed - the bohemian and the juvenile delinquent came face to face with the Negro, and the hipster was a fact in American life. If marijuana was the wedding ring, the child was the language of Hip for its argot gave expression to abstract states of feeling which all could share, at least





all who were Hip. And in this wedding of the white and the black it was the Negro who brought the cultural dowry. Any Negro who wishes to live must live with danger from his first day, and no experience can ever be casual to him, no Negro can saunter down a street with any real certainty that violence will not visit him on his walk.

(Advertisements, 306)

At the outset of the novel, then, Mailer sets out the terms and conditions of the hipster's life. We have seen that the narrator has undergone the process of redefinition and has taken up residence in a quasi-Harlem. We are also told that the mind of the narrator is clouded with amnesia, but it would be more exact to say that the narrator has moved into the present, "the enormous present" that was referred to earlier in Mailer's description of the ubiquitous mental landscape in which the Negro himself lives. Lovett says of his mental condition:

Memory for me was never a wall but more a roulette of the most extraordinary events and the most insignificant, all laced into the same vessel until I could not discern the most casual fact from the most patent fancy, nor the past from the future; and the details of my own history were lost in the other, common to us all. I could never judge whether something had happened to me or I imagined it so.

(Barbary Shore, 4)

He goes on to discuss the fruitless efforts he made to regain some memory of his past:

Prodigious efforts, but I recovered nothing except to learn that I had no past and was therefore without a future. The blind grow ears, the deaf learn how to see, and I acquired both in compensation; it was natural, even obligatory, that the present should possess the state.

(Barbary Shore, 4)

It would seem that the narrator is telling the reader that what he is about to read is merely fantasy, for the





narrator has admitted his inability to distinguish history from fancy. The story he tells, however, purports to be a history "common to us all." Huck Finn tells us at the outset of his story that "You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer".<sup>2</sup> Huck maintains that he is only a character in a novel and that the story is but a figment of the imagination of the author. Leslie Fiedler quotes Twain as saying "I think I can carry the reader a long way before he suspects I am laying a tragedy-trap."<sup>3</sup> Mailer is saying a similar thing in this novel and in "The White Negro" he goes onto tell us about the process, fantastic or not, that Lovett is about to go through:

The psychopath is notoriously difficult to analyze because the fundamental decision of his nature is to try to live the infantile fantasy, and in this decision (given the dreary alternative of psychoanalysis) there may be a certain instinctive wisdom. For there is a dialectic which underlies all psychoanalytic method: it is the knowledge that if one is to change one's habits, one must go back to the source of their creation, and so the psychopath exploring backward along the road of the homosexual, the orgiast, the drug-addict, the rapist, the robber and the murderer seeks to find those violent parallels to the violent and often hopeless contradictions he knew as a child. For if he has the courage to meet the parallel situation at the moment when he is ready, then he has a chance to act as he has never acted before, and in satisfying the frustration - if he can succeed - he may then pass by the symbolic substitute through the locks of incest. In thus giving expression to the buried infant in himself, he can lessen the tension of those infantile desires and so free himself to remake a bit of his nervous system.

(Advertisements, 311)

The narrator tells us a similar story at the beginning of his account of the incidents that make up Barbary Shore:

I doubt if I shall find my childhood and my youth - but I have come to understand the skeleton perhaps of the larger





history, and not everything is without its purpose. I have even achieved a balance, if that is what it may be called.  
 (Barbary Shore, 5)

The narrator, then, is a unique man. He is of the hipsters who found themselves defined by the violence of their world; he is at one with their philosophy and their psychopathy as revealed in "The White Negro"; yet Lovett has his own peculiar path to find back into the "infantile fantasy". Because he cannot know the "violent and often hopeless contradictions" of his childhood, he must confront the "larger history" if he is to "create a new nervous system" for himself. Though he has grown new eyes and new ears he has not lived the life that created him. Lovett's interest in the Communist Revolution in America is a direct product of his desire to retrace the steps of the revolutionary back to the crucial beginning of failure and corruption.

When seen as the hipster the narrator takes on an interesting complexity. As the hipster-psychopath he is on an "associational journey into the past" that is "lived out in the theatre of the present". (Advertisements, 311) As the narrator-historian he presents us with the history of our modern self. And, finally, as a character in a novel written by Norman Mailer he is living out the immediacy and the terror of the "enormous present":

At bottom, the drama of the psychopath is that he seeks love. Not love as the search for a mate, but love as the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it . . . . But in this search, the psychopath becomes an embodiment of the extreme contradictions of the society which formed his character, and the apocalyptic orgasm often remains as remote





as the Holy Grail.

(Advertisements, 312)

Barbary Shore must be seen, then, through at least three lenses, the hipster-psychopath, narrator-historian, and fictional character, all of which are aspects of the mind of the narrator. As Lovett states:

Now, in the time I write, when other men besides myself must contrive a name, a story, and the papers they carry, I wonder if I do not possess an advantage. For I have been doing it longer, and am tantalized less by the memory of better years. They must suffer, those others like myself. I wonder what fantasies bother them? (Barbary Shore, 5)

All then is a fantasy but we must see it through the eyes and hear it through the ears of a man who has developed "a new nervous system":

Truth is no more nor less than what one feels at each instant in the perpetual climax of the present.  
(Advertisements, 318)

If in Barbary Shore we have been exposed to the psyche of the hipster in abstraction, it is in The Deer Park that the relationship of the hipster to both society and art is explored. The narrator of The Deer Park is similar to Mikey Lovett in that he is also a product of the violent world when he turns up in Desert D<sup>o</sup>Or. Just as Lovett goes to a quasi-Harlem to find the present so Sergius O'Shaugnessy also finds himself immersed in the present:

A long time ago, Desert D<sup>o</sup>Or was called Desert Door by the prospectors who put up their shanties at the edge of its oasis and went into the mountains above the desert to look for gold. But there is nothing left of those men; when the site of Desert D<sup>o</sup>Or was chosen, none of the old shacks remained.

No, everything is in the present tense, and during the months I stayed at the resort, I came to know it in a





way we can know few places. (The Deer Park, 7)

But Desert D<sup>o</sup>Or is a present of a different colour. Whereas in Harlem and in Greenwich Village and in all the other hipster presents the colour is a violent, passionate black, the town in which O'Shaughnessy finds a present takes on its colour from the white and arid desert that surrounds it. Mailer points to this irony of the present in his epigraph:

. . . the Deer Park, that gorge of innocence and virtue in which were engulfed so many victims who when they returned to society brought with them depravity, debauchery and all the vices they naturally acquired from the infamous officials of such a place . . . (The Deer Park, Epigraph)

O'Shaughnessy is a soldier who has returned to white America only to discover during his stay in the Deer Park of his old home that his real home is no longer in the sunshine of white America but, indeed, in the underground. Mailer sums up the journey near the end of the novel:

With a stop or two on the way, I found my hole in New York, a cold-water flat outside the boundary of the Village, and I had a few girls who made for some very complicated romances, and I suppose I learned a little more - life is an education which should be put to use - and I tried to write my novel about bullfighting, but it was not very good.  
(The Deer Park, 300)

There is a second aspect to Sergius which we must consider here, for it is directly related to the journey we have just mentioned. Sergius is an artist as well as a hipster. Whereas in Barbary Shore Mailer is more concerned with social elements than with the artistic nature of Mikey Lovett, in The Deer Park Mailer is concerned with the hipster as writer and the relationships and responsibilities of the





hipster-artist to an engulfing society. At the beginning of his development as an artist Sergius makes a distinction between the "real" world and the world of the writer. In other words, he sees a clear division existing between the lives of the hipster and the artist. And as a hipster and as a writer Sergius is a microcosm of this division between the two worlds:

I could feel an odd hope when I thought that maybe I would become a writer.

For such purpose, Desert D<sup>o</sup>Or may have been a poor place to stay, and in truth, I hardly wrote a word while I was at the resort. But I was not ready to work; I needed time and I needed the heat of the sun. I do not know if I can explain that I did not want to feel too much, and I did not want to think. I had the idea that there were two worlds. There was a real world as I called it, a world of wars and boxing clubs and children's homes on back streets, and this real world was where orphans burned orphans. It was better not even to think of this. I liked the other world in which almost everybody lived. The imaginary world.  
(The Deer Park, 45)

In this quotation Sergius contrasts the "real" world, the world of the orphans (and the hipster is a social orphan who has undergone symbolic plastic surgery), and the world of the writer. But at the end of the novel when he has managed to extricate himself from the deadly "reality" of the desert he is able to see the writer and the hipster as complementary:

I had some ideas for my bullfighting novel, and I tried to force work on it, and instead found myself beginning pieces of this novel, at last I understood a little, and as I wrote, I found that I was stronger. I had survived, I was finally able to keep in some permanent form those parts of myself which were better than me, and therefore I could have the comfort that I was beginning to belong to that privileged world of orphans where art is found.

(The Deer Park, 302)





The orphan from the real world and the artist from the imaginary have found each other and, hence have found their own selves.

This discovery comes, however, only after Sergius has surmounted the obstacles which previously hampered his search for his own powers. On the one level, it is the search of the artist for what may be called "the confidence of vision", but on another, more immediate level it is the search of the hipster for the "apocalyptic orgasm". The narrator admits to a sexual problem at the beginning:

Once or twice, with girls I picked up in the bars of Desert D'Or, I had tried to cut my knot and only succeeded in tying it more tightly. (The Deer Park, 20)

Another of the aspiring hipsters in the novel, Marion Faye, perceives Sergius' problem and is more correct in his analysis than he can ever know:

Love was the subject that steered Faye. "You look," he said to me, "you take two people living together. Cut away all the propaganda. It's dull. The end. So you go the other direction. You find a hundred chicks, you find two hundred. It gets worse than dull. It makes you sick. I swear you start thinking of using a razor. I mean, that's it," he said, waving a finger like a pendulum, "screwing the one side, pain the other side. Killing. The whole world is bullshit. That's why people want a dull life," (The Deer Park, 20)

For Sergius, sex has become entirely identified with the burnt bodies of the victims of the Korean War and the relationship that exists between violence and sex has not yet taken on the cynical qualities of Marion Faye's speech, let alone the hipster philosophy of the white Negro. It is in the inability to resolve this sex-violence irony that Sergius'





psychosomatic disease has its germ. When he is finally able to make love to Lulu there is a promise that all will be well in the future. However, later in the process of discovery he reveals the return of the sickness and the continuing fantasy of violence that haunts his sexuality:

I tried to tell it all to her, about the Japanese K. P. and how I came not to like the fliers I knew, until finally there had come the time when I could no longer go to the geisha girls, so nice, so feminine, because flesh was raw, flesh was the thing one burned in the real world, and in a kind of sweat at myself, I would yell into the pressure of my brain, "I enjoy it, I enjoy the fire. I have the cruelty to be a man." So I had been without a woman and without love until the night I met her, she had been the first in over a year, and that had meant more, it had meant so much more than anything which had happened to me . . . except that now my sickness seemed to have returned.

(The Deer Park, 198)

The search for the "apocalyptic orgasm" has resulted in what Mailer calls the "frog and the well" situation. As a direct result of

the ambushes of violence in his own necessities and in the imperatives and retaliations of the men and women among whom he lives his life, so that even as he drains his hatred in one act or another, so the conditions of his life create it anew in him until the drama of his movements bears a sardonic resemblance to the frog who climbed a few feet in the well only to drop back again. (Advertisements, 312)

Sergius, as a potential Negro, is telling us and finding out for himself about the sexuality of the white man. We have seen that he is on the search for the mythical orgasm and we have also seen in "The White Negro" that the orgasm in question relates directly to the ability of man to communicate:

For to swing is to communicate, is to convey the rhythms of one's own being to a lover, a friend, or an audience, and





- equally necessary - be able to feel the rhythms of their response. (Advertisements, 315)

The white man in Sergius leads him to the colony to find home, to find white sexuality, and to find communication once again. However, the Negro in the post-war Sergius finds only the "hang-up", the continuing "Knot", the inability to communicate.

In the face of this sickness and in the face of the possible engulfment by society, Sergius finally takes the step into the depth of the hipster world by renouncing the social values of that world. His action parallels the "associational journey into the past" that we saw Lovett take in Barbary Shore for he, in fact, returns to the orphanage and to the "real" world of the hipster-artist:

I learned again the great anger of working at the bottom where the thought that you do not own a Cadillac is as far away as the infantryman's knowledge that he will never get a General's star . . . I had found the orphanage again and I was home; I might just as well never have left home.

(The Deer Park, 245)

Embodied in these words is the equation of the world of the Desert D'Or and the world of the soldier. It is equation that is directly responsible for the generation of the hipster. Throughout the novel the narrator is confronted by the falsity of the people who create the society; he sees the reality of the mirror images; he discovers disillusionment again when the "communist" director, Charles Eitel, gives in to the pressures of his society. What he sees is the irony involved in the Epigraph about the original Deer





Park. In reaction to each of these discoveries Sergius learns the great anger that finally inspires the rebellion which leads him out of this hollow society. At the end of his journey he imagines Eitel's final farewell:

"For you see," he confessed in his mind, "I have lost the final desire of the artist, the desire which tells us that when all else is lost, when love is lost and adventure, pride of self, and pity, there still remains that world we may create, more real to us, more real to others, than the mummery of what happens, passes, and is gone. So, do try Sergius," he thought, try for that other world, the real world, where orphans burn orphans and nothing is more difficult to discover than a simple fact. And with all the pride of the artist, you must blow against the walls of every power that exists, the small trumpet of your defiance."

(The Deer Park, 318)

Earlier in this chapter we were concerned with the nature of hipster perception and its effect on our own understanding of Mikey Lovett's history. In The Deer Park we must concern ourselves with the nature of hipster-artist perception.

With the stress placed on the present and the development of a "new nervous system" Sergius, as hipster, is attempting to be fully aware of the dimensions of the present even if this means the artistic creation of an imaginary past. In other words, Sergius is an observer of the present tense of Desert D'Or and comes to know it "in a way we can know few places." (The Deer Park, 7) There are moments in the novel when Sergius relates events in a detail that could only come from having observed them first hand, but we know that they are imaginative pieces which recreate the past based on an extreme awareness of the present. Sergius admits:





Among the different people each of us has in himself is the gossip columnist I could have been. Maybe I would have been a bad columnist - I'm honest by inclination - but I would have been the first who saw it as an art. Quite a few times I have thought that a newspaperman is obsessed with finding the facts in order to tell a lie, and a novelist is a galley-slave to his imagination so he can look for the truth. I know that for a lot of what follows I must use my imagination.  
(The Deer Park, 88)

We could now easily assume that a large portion of the novel is a fantasy and leave it at that. However, we know of the narrator-hipster's means of perception and we have the previously quoted hipster concept of truth to dissuade us from such a position. Consider the psychology of experience:

Social phenomenology is the science of my own and others' experience. It is concerned with the relation between my experience of you and your experience of me. That is, with inter-experience. It is concerned with your behaviour and my behaviour as I experience it, and your and my behaviour as you experience it.<sup>4</sup>

This is an obviously related study in a consideration of point of view, hipster or not. The psychologist, R. D. Laing (somewhat of a hipster himself), makes certain things clear which are relevant to Mailer's point of view in The Deer Park as well as in all the novels which follow The Naked and the Dead:

I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another. Experience is man's invisibility to man . . . Experience as invisibility of man to man is at the same time more evident than anything. <sup>5</sup>Only experience is evident. Experience is the only evidence.

It is then the invisibility of man with which the hipster is predominantly concerned. His search for the "apocalyptic orgasm" is an attempt to assert the reality of experience by





uniting the rhythms of two bodies. This invisibility is attacked by an imagination which is as equally "real" as the experience itself:

This distinction between outer and inner usually refers to the distinction between behaviour and experience; but sometimes it refers to some experiences that are supposed to be 'inner' in contrast to others that are 'outer'. More accurately this is a distinction between different modalities of experience, namely, perception (as outer) in contrast to imagination etc. (as inner). But perception, imagination, phantasy, reverie, dreams, memory, are simply different modalities of experience, none more 'inner' or 'outer' than any others.

If point of view is related to perception and if perception and imagination are equally valid means of experiencing the truth then the fantasy created by the artist no longer depends on "a willing suspension of disbelief". For Mailer and his hipster point of view the admission of fantasy does not involve any distancing of the reader from reality, for the hipster's present, the hipster's truth is the immediate experience:

Truth is no more nor less than what one feels at each instant in the perpetual climax of the present.

(Advertisements, 318)





### CHAPTER III

#### "THE PSYCHIC CROSSROADS OF THE MIND"

#### -SOME THOUGHTS ON TIME-

- 1 -

Whatever proves to be alive for one's writing - love, violence, drugs, sex, loss, family, work, death, defeat, victory or something unimportant to anyone else - comes from those few moments which reach the psychic crossroads of the mind and there become a nucleus of a new imagination. (Advertisements, 302)

In the room where I write this chapter there is a clock on the desk and an empty canister which once contained pipe tobacco. Although I cannot see changes taking place in the form or in the structure of the can the clock tells me that a certain period of time has passed since I last looked at the can. When I look at it again I see that the canister is in exactly the same position as it was before, and it does not appear to have undergone any changes in its structure or form. As I perceive it, the canister seems to be out of time. But if I were to pound on the can with a hammer, time would be of massive relevance to the can and to myself, for I would have released energy, both physically and psychically. Out of this elementary example the two major concepts of Norman Mailer's theory of time may be



drawn. Mailer terms these concepts "Time potential" and "Time dynamic":

If through a given point, a line is drawn parallel to a given line, and proves to be nothing other than the same line, why then we have abstracted a first theorem on the nature of Time: that lines parallel represent a function of the natural unwinding of Time (its onanistic tracings) when Time left to its own resources is excited into action neither by murder nor love, and so remains in step to the switching of a clock. Such is passive Time, Time on its way to death; but Time as growth, Time as the excitations and chilling stimulations of murder, Time as the tropical envelopments of love (even if murder is lusty in the chest and love a cold sweat on the hip), Time is then the hard of a hoodlum or the bitch on her back looking for the lover whose rhythm will move her into the future.

(Advertisements, 466)

Although an extensive examination of the metaphysics of Mailer's concept of Time is beyond the scope of this present study, it is of some relevance to examine the relationship of his theory to several of the works themselves, for as the narrator says in the prologue to a proposed long novel, temporarily entitled "Advertisements for Myself on the Way Out":

I put words together at a desk, and the little actions I describe have already happened to me, or to others, still I do not know who I am nor where I am, nor even if literally I write. Yet, just so soon as I suggest that I am without particular embodiment I feel bubbles of laughter at the particular present tense of my consciousness which sees into the past, is recovering the future, and yet does neither, for perhaps I scramble the order of Time in order to retrieve the order of form from what is formless and yet over-real.

(Advertisements, 470)

Before we see how Mailer's theory of time works itself out in the novels it is necessary to examine The Naked and the Dead, Mailer's first novel in which his awareness of the importance of time is revealed in its chronological





pattern. In The Naked and the Dead Mailer, uses Time as a technique to illuminate the determinism which runs through the novel as its central philosophic position. He does not make specific statements about the nature of Time as he does in his other works; however, Mailer's use of tense reveals the underlying importance of the concepts he is to elucidate later. The novel begins with a short section written in the past progressive tense. The section following is written in the present tense while the rest of the chapter is in the past perfect except for a final section written again in the past progressive. The rest of the novel varies between sections in the present tense and others in the past perfect. In the midst of this grammatical book-keeping there is a point of considerable interest, for we notice that Mailer describes in the present tense those incidents which presumably took place before the war while the story of the war itself is related in the past perfect.

In the previous chapter we saw how Mailer cautioned us about the element of fantasy in The Deer Park and in Barbary Shore. In this first novel he uses tense to deliver a warning to the reader about the nature of "reality". The first section of Chapter I, written in the present tense, describes a soldier on the way to the washroom on the night before the invasion:

The soldier remains for a long time, and then slowly he stands up, hoists his green fatigue pants, and thinks of his struggle to get back to his bunk. He knows he will lie there wait-





ing for dawn and he says to himself, I wish it was time already, I don't give a damn, I wish it was time already. And as he returns, he is thinking of an early morning in his childhood when he had lain awake because it was to be his birthday and his mother had promised him a party.

(The Naked and the Dead, 8)

The soldier is singled out from the other men in the novel, for he is never identified, and the tense used in the description isolates this passage from all the other war sections. But the immediacy of the tension, the sweat, and the heat draws the reader into a reality which seems to imply "Now, the world is neither meaningful nor absurd. It simply is."<sup>1</sup> This implication is an advertisement directing the reader towards the nature of "reality" while at the same time adding greater significance to the "is-ness" of detail.

Mailer takes great pains to invest in the minor situation a significance which is almost as powerful as the war scenes themselves. In the "choruses" which dot the landscape of the novel, Mailer draws, in the form of playlets, a detailed portrait of minor events which, though they do not affect the invasion of the island, have profound importance for the state of each soldier in the campaign. "The Chow Line" and "Rotation" capture the men in private displays of varying degrees of stoical acceptance of army existence or rebellion against the authority of the army itself. The men who live behind the newspaper heroes are revealed in "The Million-Dollar Wound", a playlet which, in its immediacy, points directly to the humanity of the soldiers who are faced with death by violence or with slow death by the grad-





ual oppression of the authority and rules of their own masters. All the choruses focus upon the minor and often absurd attempts of the soldier to preserve his own being in the face of massive external powers.

The use of tense takes on major significance in the sections called "The Time Machine", for it is in these passages that Mailer creates the histories of the individual soldiers. By writing these sections in the present tense he is able to give voice to a philosophy of determinism which is born out of an awareness of the past and its specter in the present. As Eitel, the director in The Deer Park, states:

Was it not possible after all that here was no such thing as Love, but only that everybody loved in their own way and did the best they could? "Life has made me a determinist", he thought in passing. (The Deer Park, 313)

What happened in the past lives of the soldiers becomes the present, for each soldier's part has a direct bearing on how he acts in the present of the war. For example, Sergeant Croft's behaviour in the war is a product of the pre-war period, and he has no chance, indeed no desire, to re-create himself in an environment in which every man is forced back upon the resources of his own mind and body, even though his energy may derive from the omnipotent military stratagem. Again, in "The Time Machine" Mailer intrudes for a moment to describe Croft, the Hunter:

His main cast of mind was a superior contempt toward nearly all other men. He hated weakness and he loved practically





nothing. There was a crude unformed vision in his soul but he was rarely conscious of it. (The Naked and the Dead, 124)

The baring of Sam Croft's psyche allows us to penetrate more deeply into the nature of his vision:

His ancestors pushed and laboured and strained, drove their oxen, sweated their women, and moved a thousand miles.

He pushed and laboured inside himself and smouldered with an endless hatred.

(You're all a bunch of fugging whores)

(You're all a bunch of dogs)

(You're all deer to track)

I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF

(The Naked and the Dead, 130)

The combined use of history and the dramatic present in the description of Croft's past life becomes a part of the war situation, for Croft's desire to climb the mountain is an inescapable aspect of his being. The past of the man is as vital as the present, and Mailer's use of the present tense for that which is history reveals his cognizance of the thread of determinism which winds its way through the lives of all the men in the novel. Determinism binds Croft to his dream, his vision:

Through the glasses, the image of the mountain became more and more intense, holding Croft in absorption. The mountain and the cloud and the sky were purer, more intense, in their gelid silent struggle than any ocean and any shore he had ever seen. The rocks gathered themselves in the darkness, huddled together against the fury of the water. The contest seemed an infinite distance away, and he felt a thrill of anticipation at the thought that by the following night they might be on the peak. Again, he felt a crude ecstasy. He could not have given the reason, but the mountain tormented him, beckoned him, held an answer to something he wanted. It was so pure, so austere.

(The Naked and the Dead, 387)

History and grammar blend once more in the depiction of Goldstein, a depiction at once immediate, individual, and





collective. Here the past, history itself, is not only a man's history, but a people's. The history of Goldstein becomes, in war, the history of the whole Jewish race - the fight for dignity, the suffering, and the final vision of the home in Israel. "The Time Machine", which takes Mailer back into the heart and mind of Goldstein, lays open the sexuality of the Jews' search for the heart that is Israel. Mailer parallels Goldstein's search for the "apocalyptic orgasm" with his wife and the attempt by his people to re-establish their heart in Israel:

Yehudah Halevy said Israel is the heart of all nations. What attacks the body attacks the heart. And the heart is also the conscience, which suffers for the sins of the nations. He shrugs once more, does not differentiate between saying aloud what he thinks or merely moving his lips. It's an interesting problem, but personally I think a Jew is a Jew because he suffers. (The Naked and the Dead, 376)

Abruptly, he [Goldstein] is conscious of the pressure in his loins, the perspiration on his back, and he halts roughly, relaxing again.

How close are you?

Don't worry about me, Joey.

He is angry suddenly. Tell me, how close are you?

Oh, darling, I won't be able to tonight, it's not important, go ahead, don't mind me, it's not important.

The bickering offends both of them, makes them cold. He dreads his tasteless isolated throe, knows suddenly that he cannot do it, cannot lie afterwards on his bed depressed with failure. (The Naked and the Dead, 382)

The parallel is delineated more precisely toward the end of the novel when Goldstein and Ridges are given the task of returning the dying Wilson to the beach:

Both of them felt a natural frustration with having carried him this far only to die. They wanted to complete their odyssey with success . . . From time to time he would move his lips, scratch feebly at his face. "Israel is the heart of all nations."





But the heart could be killed and the body still live. All the suffering of the Jews came to nothing. No sacrifices were paid, no lessons were learned. It was all thrown away, all statistics in the cruel wastes of history. All the ghettos, all the soul crippling, all the massacres and pogroms, the gas chambers, lime-kilns - all of it touched no one, all of it was lost. It was carried and carried and carried, and when it finally grew too heavy it was dropped. That was all there was to it. He was beyond tears, he stood beside Ridges with the stricken sensation of a man who discovers that someone he loves has died. There was nothing in him at the moment, nothing but a vague anger, a deep resentment, and the origins of a vast hopelessness.

(The Naked and the Dead, 529, 531)

Like Croft and the other men Goldstein cannot escape the history which has bound him to his destiny. What was past is in fact happening now, for all is one in the great stage of the omnipotent present.

- 11 -

Brave murder. Brave murder gave the charge of the man one killed. Time potential and Time dynamic - it was the grand connection, and the dead man's Time because one's own Time, his energies regenerated the dead circuits of one's own empty-balled Time, and one moved away with greater strength, new nerves, and a heavier burden.

(Advertisements, 271)

Mailer's interest in Time as a technique in his first novel is developed in his later works into a theory of Time. This theory, in its infancy during the writing of The Naked and the Dead, can be applied to it, for the result of this application reveals that the novel is as much the root of Mailer's theory of Time as it is the description of the environment which gives birth to the hipster. In this section and the following one, then, we will be concerned with the theory as it is elucidated in his novels which follow The





Naked and the Dead and with the working out of this theory in all the novels.

Murder, like love, is an orgasmic measure of Time dynamic and in its excitations there is both the re-creation of one's sensitivity and the added pressure of a new circuit, the increased weight of new experience. In a war environment killing and murder are no longer moments of excitation and measures of Time dynamic. Rather murder can be like the "twitching of the clock" which measures Time potential or Time passive. Mailer talks about the "onanisms of connectionless Time" ("connection" being either murder or love), but when connections become as regular as the moments of passive Time the burden of connections weighs heavy on the killer and the lover. The language of violence and love then defines the hero as the man who can withstand the extremities of either. In "Time of her Time" Mailer deals with the creation of heroes through the extremity of the love vision in Time dynamic:

And like a real killer, she did not look back, and was out the door before I could rise to tell her that she was a hero fit for me. (Advertisements, 451)

The Naked and the Dead is then revealed to be a novel about overwhelming burden which Croft, Martinez, Cummings, Goldstein, Gallagher, Ridges, and Wilson carry as far as it seems humanly possible.<sup>2</sup> One by one they fall with the weight of their burden until only Goldstein and Ridges, and possibly Gallagher, are able to sustain it by making the





loss of the burden as climactic and as exciting as the original assumption of the burden. Cummings' victory is ironically pulled out of his grasp by the author who contrives to have the war win itself while Cummings is away. Croft, another man of vision, loses his victory in a cloud of bees. But Ridges and Goldstein drag their burden of a dead Wilson (and the heart of Israel) all the way to the orgasmic release that awaits them at the beach. Though they lose their burden just before they reach the beach they are able to see the loss as a moment of Time dynamic. A new vision is then created out of the remains of the vision which kept them going in the face of the pressures of jungle, mountain, and Time. Croft, on the other hand, is unable to see the loss of his burden as Time dynamic. He can only think of it as loss:

He had failed and it hurt him vitally. His frustration was loose again. He would never have another opportunity to climb it. And yet he was wondering if he could have succeeded. Once more he was feeling the anxiety and terror the mountain had roused on the rock stairway. If he had gone alone, the fatigue of the other men would not have slowed him but he would not have had their company, and he realized suddenly that he could not have gone without them. The empty hills would have eroded any man's courage.

(The Naked and the Dead, 552)

Hence Time dynamic has become in this context as onanistic as Time potential. In a very real sense Time becomes one with the Japanese and the island as the external forces which the soldiers must individually overcome. The Americans must kill the enemy, surmount Anaka, and penetrate the jungles, and in every case they must confront "the avaricious





energy-plucking hairy old grotto of Time" (Advertisements, 476) The inter-relationship of these three forces is seen clearly in the last pages of the novel. It is at this point that Major Dalleson comes upon an idea that is as important to Mailer's metaphysical concepts of war, murder, love, and Time as it is to military morale and training:

At this moment he got his idea. He could jazz up the map-reading class by having a full-size color photograph of Betty Grable in a bathing suit, with a co-ordinate grid system laid over it. The instructor could point to different parts of her and say, "Give me the co-ordinates."

(The Naked and the Dead, 558)

The implication of this plan is that wars would no longer be waged across impersonal and inhuman landscapes but rather armies would entrench themselves in or blitz across the female body. Men would no longer kill but love in their search for the orgasm. Time dynamic would then be the connection of the rhythms of two human bodies instead of the perpetual dynamism involved in the killing of other men. Dalleson's idea combines the three resisting forces of the Japanese, Nature, and the incessant beat of an exhausting Time. For it is in his idea that the topography of the earth becomes explicitly the anatomy of the female. The intrusion of the human onto the island goes beyond implication to the reality of sex.<sup>3</sup> And in The Deer Park Mailer elucidates the Time-Sex relationship:

There are hours when I would have the arrogance to reply to the Lord Himself, and so I ask, "Would You agree that sex is where philosophy begins?"

But God, who is the oldest of the philosophers, answers in His weary cryptic way, "Rather think of Sex as Time,





and Time as the connection of new circuits."  
 (The Deer Park, 318)

In the first chapter we saw how Mailer brings violence and sexuality into a marriage but now we can go further to the point where violence, the "brave murder", becomes a connection which in its electricity and stimulation is as much Time dynamic as sex itself is.

From this point of view The Naked and the Dead is a novel which explores with an unprotected hand the circuits of violence and sex. It is not so much a story of men confronting their environment as a history in the present tense of the making of heroes whose destiny led them to the Time of their Time.

- iii -

At the beginning of this chapter we noticed that it is in the novels which follow The Naked and the Dead that Mailer becomes increasingly explicit in elucidating his concept of Time. We dealt in the previous chapter with the nature of the present as it appears in Barbary Shore and The Deer Park in sociological and psychological terms, but it remains for us to examine the present in the context of the philosophy we have seen unwinding in The Naked and the Dead.

In Barbary Shore and The Deer Park Mailer confronts the concept of the "enormous present". We saw how Mikey Lovett of Barbary Shore lived out in the present his search for the origins of the "larger history". This search in-





volves all the ironies we have seen at work in Mailer's first novel, for Lovett is attempting metaphorically to write a history, again in the present tense, of the Communist failure in America. The history begins with a fantasy in which Lovett sees a traveller lost and alienated in a dream town. Lovett asserts its reality:

His hand folds upon his heart to still its beating. It is a dream, he thinks, hugging his body in the rear of the cab. He is dreaming and the city is imaginary and the cab is imaginary. And on he goes.

I shout at him. You are wrong, I cry, although he does not hear me; this city is the real city, the material city, and your vehicle is history. Those are the words I use, and then the image shatters.

(Barbary Shore, 6)

So at the outset Mailer presents us with a microcosm of a greater reality and places in this landscape a character who, by the nature of his psyche, must live out the history of this reality in the immediacy of the present. Throughout the novel Communism is placed on trial with McLeod representing the potential of the Revolution and Hollingsworth assuming the role of the fascistic and tyrannical investigator who represents the Government. The ironic aspect of this trial is that though the Revolution did not fail the Government it failed such people as Lannie and Lovett who, in the novel, are relegated to observers while the Government acts as both prosecutor and judge. At the end of the novel Lovett finds himself in almost the same position as he was at the beginning. Time has passed but it was only measured by the ticking of the clock and the re-creation of





a "larger history". Lovett is in a different room; he has assumed a new name. His possessions have enlarged in one sense; yet in another they have remained the same. McLeod may have given him his will:

The envelope contained McLeod's will:

To Michael Lovett to whom, at the end  
of my life and for the first time within  
it, I find myself capable of the rudiments  
of selfless friendship, I bequeath in heri-  
tage the remnants of my socialist culture.

(Barbary Shore, 311)

but Lovett had the "remnants of my socialist culture" at the beginning of the novel. For it is at the beginning that Mikey sees the present, and the present in Barbary Shore is filled with the alienation of the man in the "imaginary" taxi-cab. This present is a direct result of the failure of the Communist Revolution in America. As Norman Podhoretz says:

Mailer's real subject is the effect on modern life of the failure of the Russian Revolution, and if there is an extravagant assumption at work in Barbary Shore, it is that all our difficulties (political, spiritual, psychological, and sexual) are directly traceable to this failure. "The growth of human consciousness in this century demanded-for its expanding vitality - that a revolution be made," Mailer wrote some years later, and in this sentence, I think, we have the key to Barbary Shore.<sup>4</sup>

Lovett describes his own present at the outset:

Time passes and I wait by the door, listening to the footsteps of roomers as they go to work for the night. In fourteen hours they will be back.

So the blind lead the blind and the deaf shout warnings to one another until their voices are lost.

(Barbary Shore, 6)

The "enormous present" remains with Lovett to the end even though he has just completed a voyage through the history of





the modern world:

Thus time passes, and I work and I study, and I keep my eye on the door.

Meanwhile, vast armies mount themselves, the world revolves, the traveller clutches his breast. From out the unyielding contradictions of labor stolen from men, the march to the endless war forces its pace. Perhaps, as the millions will be lost, others will be created, and I shall discover brothers where I thought none existed.

But for the present the storm approaches its thunderhead, and it is apparent that the boat drifts ever closer to shore. So the blind will lead the blind and the deaf shout warnings to one another until their voices are lost.

(Barbary Shore, 312)

And so we come full circle - from the present through the past to the present that is always the stage.

Again in The Deer Park we are exposed to a present, but in this novel it is ironic. There are, in fact, two presents in the novel - Desert D'Or and the underground of New York in which Sergius finds his true home. Barbary Shore deals with the past as present history; The Deer Park deals with the present as future. In the last chapter we saw how Mailer's narrator was on a quest for the "apocalyptic orgasm" and, at the same time, was searching for his true home. Both lay in the future for Sergius. For Mikey Lovett the past was acted out on the stage of the present, but for Sergius the future is acted out in the present. There is an irony at work here since this is a search which does not involve movement in time. At least, it does not involve movement in Mailer's Time dynamic chronology. The "apocalyptic orgasm" he has with Lulu turns out to be nothing more than a momentary escape from his sexual problems. It is but an intimation of Time dynamic. Mailer's poem, "Dead Ends," contains a similar





thought:

I have been able to mother  
     the body of another  
     and sweet is the feel  
     that the timeless hour of love  
     is the first breath  
     of the sweet bitch Time.

(Advertisements, 457)

There are no excitations to measure growth involved in Time dynamic. There is only Time potential. Through a series of perceptions which are a product of his hipster birthright (and hence an aspect of the greater present of the New York underground) Sergius is able to move back to his true home, the quasi-Harlem. What he has succeeded in accomplishing has been to move into the future by regaining the "enormous present". Again, in the context of Time passive there has been movement along the trajectory from one point to another towards death, but in the context of Time dynamic there has been but the unification of the future and the present. In once sense, there has also been the unification of the past and the present and the future, for as we saw in the last chapter Sergius metaphorically returns to the orphanage. But again he moves from the present to the past only by virtue of his residence in the "enormous present" of the hipster world. At the end, Sergius has still not arrived at the Mecca of orgasms. He is "anxious for something else" (The Deer Park, 301) even in the midst of his relations with women. He has come, however, to awareness of Time dynamic, to awareness of the im-



portance of the present:

Then for a moment in that cold Irish soul of mine, a glimmer of the joy of the flesh came toward me, rare as the eye of the rarest tear of compassion, and we laughed together after all, because to have heard that sex was time and time the connection of new circuits was a part of the poor odd dialogues which give hope to us noble humans for more than one night.  
(The Deer Park, 319)





## CHAPTER IV

### NORMAN MAILER'S "AMERICAN DREAM"

A symbol is static. It exists eternally, immutably. It is the circle of the sun or the wave of the sea. But a metaphor is a relation. It changes as our experience changes. We say for example: the sun was burning with hate. A day later the meaning alters and we say to ourselves that it is only our own hatred we perceived in the sun; in a week the metaphor has come to mean something else again, something deeper perhaps - between the sun and ourselves is a celestial terrain of hatreds which alter our understanding of the sun at every moment. (Cannibals and Christians, 168)

Throughout Mailer's four novels there exists a concern with the nature of good and evil. Good and evil exist not as abstract notions but as objective forces which affect the structure of a man's life. From The Naked and the Dead to An American Dream the forces of good and evil develop from metaphor to symbol, from metaphor as relation to symbol as stasis. In the novels this movement parallels a similar movement from suggestions, intimations, and momentary glimpses of the nature of evil to a statement and a vision of evil as a demonic force. Though The Naked and the Dead is a novel in the realistic mode the "momentary glimpses" of evil as a force in war indicate that Mailer will develop from a social realist to a writer who can create a book such as An American Dream. Mailer's development as an artist





from a realist to an adventurer in the realms of good and evil finds its analogy in the search for the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. Like the hero Theseus Mailer travels from the world of metaphor through the creation of Dedalus to confront the monster in the static world of symbol:

So I approach Him, if I have not already lost Him, God, in His destiny, in which He may succeed, or tragically fail, for God like Us suffers the ambition to make a destiny more extraordinary than was conceived for Him, yes God is like Me, only more so.

Unless - spinning instead through the dark of some inner Space - the winds are icy here - I do no more than delude myself, fall back into that hopeless odyssey where libido never lingers, and my nature is nothing other than to search for the Devil while I carry with me the minds of some of you.

(Advertisements, 477)

Four novels are the labyrinth. With Mailer we enter into the virgin island of The Naked and the Dead; we are reborn as men with new capabilities in Barbary Shore. In The Deer Park Mailer leads us into the ironic city and, finally, into an ultimate confrontation with the Devil in An American Dream. And along the walls of the labyrinth Mailer has placed "Advertisements for Myself" which, like posters in subway station halls, point the way to the final vision. Mailer carries us through the tunnels of this "larger history" as he searches for the Devil in the crannies of the past and in the recesses of man's own consciousness.

The Naked and the Dead, Mailer's island entrance to the labyrinth, presents, in a special sense, a vision of the paradise. In a momentary, distanced view the island takes on the qualities of mythic gardens and promised lands:





The men had the impression they were staring at a fabulous island which could have existed only in their imagination. . . . It was a sensuous isle, a Biblical land of ruby wines and golden sands and indigo trees. The men stared and stared. The island hovered before them like an Oriental monarch's conception of heaven, and they responded to it with an acute and terrible longing. It was a vision of all the beauty for which they had ever yearned, all the ecstasy they had ever sought. . . . If they had been alone they might have stretched out their arms to it. (The Naked and the Dead, 353)

This "vision" is one of these momentary glimpses Mailer records as an insight into the nature of the inner forces present on the island. It is at once a vision of a heaven, a paradise out of some half-remembered fable or myth, and a "real" island infested with the language and the disease of war. As such, it is an ambiguous island in which good and evil, heaven and hell, exist as potentials. When man enters the island these forces are released as kinetic energy, a power we see in momentary flashes.

One example of the forces released by man's presence can be seen in Sam Croft's encounter with the mountain. Paradoxically, the mountain is a threat to his being which he must conquer, yet it is a part of the island, that "Biblical land of ruby wines and golden sands." Croft does not confront the mountain as though it were a corner of paradise. The conflict is between man and a force of evil which has been released from man's being and energized by him.

In An American Dream a vision of heaven is not an isolated, momentary glimpse but an integral part of the act of sex and of the stimulations of murder and violence. Good and evil, in this fourth novel, are completely woven into





the symbolic pattern. Whereas the island of The Naked and the Dead is to be taken as a "real" and external one, the island of An American Dream is a vision conjured up in the mind of Rojack by the primitive rhythms of Shago Martin:

He did not make me think, as other singers often did, of landscapes in Jamaica, of mangoes, honey, and a breast beneath a moon, of tropical love and candy which went from dark to dawn, no, Shago gave you that, he gave you some of that, but there were snakes in his tropical garden, and a wild pig was off in the wilderness with a rip in its flank from the teeth of a puma, he gave you a world of odd wild cries, and imprisoned it to something complex in his style, some irony, some sense of control, some sense of the way everything is brought back at last under control.

(An American Dream, 182)

This truly visionary island is a paradise which contains the force of evil as an integral aspect of it. The paradox of this relationship between paradise and the force of evil is heightened in the episode in which Rojack murders his wife Deborah and has the vision of heaven that accompanies the excitation of murder:

I had the mental image I was pushing with my shoulder against an enormous door which would give inch by inch to the effort. . . I released the pressure on her throat, and the door I had been opening began to close. But I had had a view of what was on the other side of the door, and heaven was there, some quiver of jeweled cities shining in the glow of a tropical dust, and I thrust against the door once more and hardly felt her hand leave my shoulder. . . .

(An American Dream, 310)

The first indication of the paradox becomes evident when the murder reaches its climax:

I was through the door, hatred passing from me in wave after wave, illness as well, rot and pestilence, nausea, a bleak string of salts. I was floating. I was as far into myself as I had ever been and universes wheeled in a dream. To my closed eyes Deborah's face seemed to float off from her body and stare at me in darkness. She gave me one malevolent





look which said: "There are dimensions to evil which reach beyond the light," and then she smiled like a milkmaid and floated away and was gone. And in the midst of that Oriental speandor of landscape, I felt the lost touch of her finger on my shoulder, radiating some faint but ineradicable pulse of detestation into the new grace.

(An American Dream, 31-32)

Later in the novel we are given an insight into the nature of this "dimension of evil" and it is not a surprising revelation if we are aware of the paradoxes which Mailer sees in the cosmic relations of God and the Devil:

"Steve?" asked Cherry.

"Yes?"

"Did you kill your wife?"

"Yes."

"Yes," she said.

"You're a cunning little cutie."

"No, baby, I knew you did it. Oh God."

"How did you know?" I asked.

"I saw a man once just after he came back from a killing. You looked like he did."

"How did he look?"

"Like he'd been painted with a touch of magic."

(An American Dream, 174)

That "touch of magic" is the glow that lingers when one has seen the mystery of the "All," the heaven and the hell.

Barney Kelly, Deborah's father, hints at this definition in his discussion of the "people at the summit." "Do you expect God or the Devil left Lenin and Hitler or Churchill alone?" says Kelly. "There's nothing but magic at the top"

(An American Dream, 246). Magic is the all-inclusive term describing Mailer's theology of the "embattled vision" in which reality is what is seen by the visionary or by any man at the moment of climax in the act of murder or sex. Reality is this vision, this central vision of Eastern





metaphysics, in which God and the Devil are seen as One, as unity. As Mailer says:

I think that the particular God we can conceive of is a god whose relationship to the universe we cannot divine; that is, how enormous He is in the scheme of the universe we can't begin to say. But almost certainly, He is not all-powerful; he exists as a warring element in a divided universe, and we are a part of - perhaps the most important part - of His great expression, His enormous destiny; perhaps he is trying to impose upon the universe His conception of being against other conceptions of being very much opposed to his. Maybe we are in a sense the seed, the seed-carriers, the voyagers, the explorers, the embodiment of that embattled vision; maybe we are engaged in an heroic activity, and not a mean one. (Advertisements, 341)

As we shall see the god-head of warring elements is realized to be a unity within man, "the embodiment of that embattled vision." The labyrinth is the path to this awareness.

Mailer's reality, the unity of God and the Devil in man, is the foundation of the spiritual conflict in Rojack's being. But Mailer arrives at the understanding of this reality only after he has completed the journey through the imaginative worlds of Barbary Shore and The Deer Park. Barbary Shore recounts the re-birth of the American after the war experiences described in The Naked and the Dead, but it also records the first moment of awareness of the internal nature of God and the Devil. Previous to this moment he sought the Devil in the crannies in the wall of modern history. But Lannie of Barbary Shore tells a tale in which we find an analogy to Mailer's realization of evil's internal source:

"Rest more," I told her, even as she was struggling to a sitting position.





"No, there's no rest, not anywhere." Her hand journeyed over her face. "There's too sad a story to tell of the princess who searched out evil for only that was left. . . ."

"Oh, there are theories today," Lannie said in sing-song. "There are so many ways to make an apostle and no way to keep one until the princess could weep . . . ." "She would have remade the world, giving each to each what was their due, so they should be proud in their vices and know that it is beauty which blossoms on guilt." Her voice droned on. "But she planted them with roots in the air and buds so deep in the muck. They dripped upon her until she was only their instrument, no more, nothing but their servant, and that she could have borne if they had been of stature, but they deserted her only too cruelly and tore the bandage from her eyes, and said look upon us for we are mud, and you have altered nothing, and you who are beneath are also mud and not a princess. And thunder came, the sky darkened and the princess saw herself and screamed, for indeed she was not the princess at all, she was nothing, she was this cigarette with the tobacco falling and afraid of fire.

(Barbary Shore, 299)

This parable is a comment on the failure of the Communist movement in America, but it can be seen as an insight into the nature of evil. The princess, who is perhaps a forerunner of the whispering child, is the saviour who failed and is then made to realize the dimensions of her being. She too is mud and not fairy dust for good and evil are intertwined, creating a reality of paradox. "Fair and foul are near of kin,/ And fair needs foul,"<sup>1</sup> says Crazy Jane in her talk with the Bishop.

The relationship between God and the hipster is, in fact, founded on the principle that God, like the Devil, is an element within man's body:

. . . to be with it is to have grace, is to be closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life which will nourish you if you can hear it, for you are then nearer to that God which every hipster believes is located in the senses of his body, . . . not the God of the churches but the inachievable





whisper of mystery within the sex; the paradise of limitless energy and perception just beyond the next wave of the next orgasm. (Advertisements, 316)

In Barbary Shore, then, Mailer becomes cognizant of the existence of God and the Devil in man's being. Lovett, Mailer's first hipster character, contains God but Mailer does not develop this element of the hipster until he writes The Deer Park. And he does not plunge into the depths of evil until An American Dream is conceived. But as an integral part of the labyrinth Barbary Shore is a vision of the first steps towards the trap that is to pull Stephen Rojack down into the insane vastness of his own subconscious awareness of God and the Devil.

In The Deer Park Mailer takes his eyes off the Devil for a moment in order to portray the search for the vision of heaven in the "apocalyptic orgasm." If The Naked and the Dead and Barbary Shore are, in one sense, confrontations with evil externalized, then The Deer Park is an attempt to move towards the light which exists before the "dimensions of evil." Sergius O'Shaughnessy comes to Desert D'Or because he sees this resort town as the vision of the present. His real present, he discovers later, is in the quasi-Harlem of New York's East Side. The process of discovery involves a growing awareness of his own crippled sexuality and a parallel awakening to the crippling effect on the individual of the Deer Park society. At first, then, he is searching for the "apocalyptic orgasm" and, at last, he is confronting the





ironic relationship of violence and sex. There is no resolution. There is not even an attempt at resolution for he chooses in the end to return to his position before the door that opens to the vision of heaven:

There were nights in the library when I would look at the footnotes in some heroically constructed tome, and know that the spirit of the rigorous scholar who had written it must know its regret, for each footnote is a step onto deeper meaning which terrifies the order of progression of the scholar's logic, until there is no point in experience, nor any word, from which one cannot set out to explore the totality of the All, if indeed there be an All and not an expanding mystery. (The Deer Park, 303)

Sergius is left at the end of the novel with the sex-violence irony intact and seemingly unresolvable. And it is, as we suggested at the outset of this chapter, from this ironic position that Mailer conducts Stephen Rojack to the heart of the "expanding mystery."

What is a sex-violence irony in The Deer Park becomes a God-Devil paradox in An American Dream. Rojack murders his wife to eradicate the Devil which possesses her and discovers heaven in an orgasm of violence. But he sees a paradisaical, shining city only to discover that "there are dimensions to evil which reach beyond the light." The complexity of this paradox is accentuated in the heat of Rojack's sexual encounter with Cherry:

I was back in her, our wills now met, locked in a contest like an exchange of stares which goes on and on, wills which begin at last in the force of equality to water and to lose tears, to soften into some light which is shut away again by the will to force tears back, steel to steel, until steel shimmers in a midst of dew, is wiped, is wet again. I was passing through a grotto of curious lights, dark lights, like





coloured lanterns beneath the sea, a glimpse of that quiver of jeweled arrows, that heavenly city which had appeared as Deborah was expiring in the lock of my arm, and a voice like a child's whisper on the breeze came up so faint I could hardly hear, "Do you want her?" it asked.

(An American Dream, 127-128)

The repeated vision of heaven leads Rojack again to God, but again he discovers the paradoxical relationship of God and the Devil:

I felt murder. It frightened me. The possibility that what I felt, when we made love, was a sensation which belonged to me alone, left me murderous. For how did one distinguish love from the art of the Devil?

(An American Dream, 176)

Rojack is trapped between his visions of God and the Devil. The child's whisper and the Devil's "tongue" have enticed the narrator into a cosmic melodrama in which he has been tied to the tracks of his own being by God and is about to be run over by the Devil:

Then I was caught. For I wanted to escape from the intelligence which let me know of murders in one direction and conceive of visits to Cherry from the other, I wanted to be free of magic, the tongue of the Devil, the dread of the Lord, I wanted to be some sort of rational man again, nailed tight to details, promiscuous, reasonable, blind to the reach of the seas. But I could not move.

(An American Dream, 255)

Through the mind of Rojack races the knowledge that he "had sold my jewels last night to the Devil, and promised them again this morning to some child's whisper" (An American Dream, 132). From his vantage point in the trap Rojack looks up to find the "elegant" Shago Martin, an agent of the Devil:

"I got nothing but elegance to sell, plus a big beat. And that big beat comes from up High, it don't come from me, I'm a





lily-white devil in a black-ass. I'm just the future, in love with myself, that's the future. I got twenty faces, I talk the tongues, I'm a devil. . . ."

(An American Dream, 189)

Cherry provides another insight into the nature of Shago and his ties to the force of evil:

"I believe God is just doing His best to learn from what happens to some of us. Sometimes I think he knows less than the Devil because we're not good enough to reach Him. So the Devil gets most of the best messages we think we're sending up. . . . Shago killed the most beautiful idea I ever had about myself. Shago killed that idea. Sometimes I felt I wasn't living with a man but with a creature. And the Devil had a pipeline into that creature and took all the hate in the country and piped it into him. . . ."

(An American Dream, 197)

Rojack killed his wife to eliminate the Devil. Now, in the face of Shago, he attacks and the violence of his act leads him close to the exhilaration he felt during the murder of Deborah and his love-making with Cherry. But he contains himself and instead of a vision of heaven he has, in the form of a memory, a vision of cockroaches, omens of the presence of evil:

There was a kind of panic which comes from a dream where one is killing cockroaches. They were about me, literally; I saw several run off in jagged directions to follow their mysterious trail - that line of pure anxiety - which one sees in the path made by a car driving over a lake of ice. But who was the driver in the cockroach?

(An American Dream, 195)

Rojack, in the trap, is now close to the illumination at the end of the labyrinth which will light the Devil's face for him and allow him to recognize the "driver of the cockroach." To escape the trap Rojack has only one choice - to confront the "driver" and to join him in a search for the





source of the Devil's power. It is a choice which must lead Rojack to the very edge of the abyss.

His choice is unwittingly made when, from Shago, Rojack inherits the pipeline of the Devil in the form of Shago's umbrella! "Now, you got a stick," (An American Dream, 201) says Cherry as she hands him Shago's power.<sup>2</sup> And it is no ordinary power, for "The handle of the umbrella seemed alive to my fingers" (An American Dream, 202) and gives impulse to thoughts which could exercise God from Rojack's being. Although the umbrella wants to return to the original source of its power, Shago, Rojack takes it to the Waldorf Hotel where he enters the gates of Hell:

For a moment I had died and was in the antechamber of Hell. I had long had a vision of Hell: not of its details; of its first moment. (An American Dream, 206)

And the umbrella seems to sense it:

The umbrella in my hand quivered like a rod, a dowsing rod, as if here, here, we had just passed some absolute of evil to the left, and there to the right an unknown concentrate, crypts of claustrophobia, abysses of open space, now through a distillate of gloom - what depressions surrounded the rich - and some compass of direction went awry in my mind; I had the physical impression we were moving through a tunnel rather than rising in a shaft. (An American Dream, 208)

Rojack vainly attempts to escape from a recognition of the Devil by exorcising a part of his being:

Once again I felt something begin to go out of the very light of my mind, as if the colors which lit the stage of my dreams would be more modest now, something vital was ready to go away forever even as once, not thirty hours ago, I had lost some other part of myself, it had streamed away on a voyage to the moon, launched out on that instant when I had been too fearful to jump, something had quit me forever, that ability of my soul to die in its place, take failure, go down honorably. Now something else was preparing to leave, some cer-





tainty of love was passing away, some knowledge it was the reward for which to live - that voice which I could no longer deny spoke again through the medium of the umbrella.

(An American Dream, 208)

The power of the umbrella and the attempted exorcism of an element of his soul have led Rojack to the abyss where he once killed the German soldiers and where he recently murdered his wife. But the inheritance of the power of Shago brightens the paradox so that he can now see the Devil. Ruta, who, like all the women in the novel, sexually combines the Devil and God in her anatomy, is one of the first to point out the Devil for Rojack:

"Since nobody can know if you know a little or a lot, a real investigation would be ending der Teufel knows where." She could not avoid a small smile. "But you are the Teufel," she went on, "You take what you want."

(An American Dream, 226)

In spite of this "accusation," Rojack retains his vision of heaven which he cannot exorcise. When he tries to force the situation into a resolution of the paradox he finds that the vision is still a reality in his mind:

I stood on a deck chair, and took the half-step up to the parapet. It was a foot wide, room enough to stand, and I stood on it, my legs a jelly, and felt some part of the heavens, some long cool vault at the entrance, a sense of the vast calm altogether aware of me. "God exists," I thought and tried to steal a look down the fall, but was not ready, not so much of a saint was I, the street rose up with a crazy yaw of pavement and I looked away, looked back at the terrace just a step down on the other side, was about to get off, and had a knowledge that to quit the parapet now was too soon - the desire to jump would be only more powerful. "But you do not have to jump," said the voice in my mind, "just take a walk around the parapet."

"I cannot take even one step," I answered.

"Take one step."

(An American Dream, 224)





For Rojack and for Mailer the only reality is perceived as the reality of the paradox.

Absurdly enough, through the medium of the umbrella the Devil is pushing him towards God, and the nature of his position in the midst of the paradox drives him to the abyss. His state is such that he is at once involved in the ultimate experience in which every nerve is keyed to a fine pitch - every sensation is total; and every second contains for him the possibility of self-annihilation. It is a point of complete awareness:

I slipped off the lip all sanity into a pit of electronic sirens and musical lyrics dictated by X-ray machines for a gout of the stench which comes from devotion to the goat came up from him [Barney] and went over to me. I no longer knew what I was doing, nor why I did it, I was in some deep of waters and no recourse but to keep swimming and never stop. Disaster would be on my body when I came to rest. Something stirred in the room. Perhaps it was the vat of liquor in my gut, but I had the sensation something of me was passing through a corridor and a breath, an odium, came up over my face as if finally I had blundered through a barrier. Kelly was near to that violence Deborah used to give off, that hurricane rising from a swamp, that offer of carnage, of cannibals, the viscera of death came from him to me like suffocation. I was going to be dead in another minute; all Deborah's wrath passed now through him, he was agent to her fury and death set about me like a ringing of echoes in ether, red light and green. I waited for Kelly to attack - he came that close - I had only to close my eyes and he would go to the fire, pick up a poker - his stopped-up violence fired the room. We could have been sitting in smoke. Then this suffocation passed, was replaced; on the beat of the silence, feeling his pulse as if it were my own, hearing his heart like the electronic wind in a microphone, I floated out on the liquor to a promise of power, some icy majesty of intelligence, a fired heat of lust.

(An American Dream, 254)

The moment of total awareness, the moment when he sees the vision of heaven he saw when he murdered Deborah





and when he made love to Cherry, this moment is with Rojack now. And it is a moment in which he has a vision of his metaphorical father of evil, Shago, entering Cherry and returning to heaven. But the vision is balanced by the image of a man being murdered in Harlem. Love and murder seem outside of Rojack yet at the same time they are an integral part of his being.

To live with such an awareness is to exist in the most extreme state in which one risks one's sanity and one's very existence. If, as Rojack discovers earlier, sanity is "the ability to hold the maximum of impossible combinations in one's mind" (An American Dream, 158), then to be is to exist in the center of the impossible. Rojack lives in this moment of Time dynamic which is both saintly and demonic. It is a trap but it is also the moment when the boundaries of sanity are destroyed and one lives simply in the total freedom of one's psyche.

Then the new message is received from the Devil and Rojack is given a second choice:

I bent to pick up the umbrella, and then the message came clear, "Walk the parapet," it said. "Walk the parapet or Cherry is dead." But I had more fear for myself than for Cherry. I did not want to walk that parapet. "Walk it," said the voice, "or you are worse than dead." And then I understood: I saw cockroaches following the line of their anxiety up the tenement walls. (An American Dream, 255)

Finally Rojack has seen the driver of the cockroaches he first encountered in his vision during the skirmish with Shago. It is his own self - that paradoxical self which leads him





to heaven only to find the energy he has expended in getting to heaven now animates the Devil. He is now aware that God and the Devil exist as a unity within his own self.

To escape the trap set by the paradox Rojack must walk the parapet in a last confrontation with the possibility of self-destruction. Once more he must face the abyss of his own self, that psychopath within him. His walk around the edge is a ritualistic acceptance of the Devil he has found residing in his own self and energized by his own psyche. (The Devil collects the debt.) The labyrinth has led him back to his own being where he must once again confront Deborah:

I pushed one forward; then the worst gust of wind came - Deborah's lone green eye flew into my eye. Hands came to pull me off, her hands, I smelled a breath - was it real? - it was gone. (An American Dream, 259)

His first encounter with his wife revealed to him the initial paradox, but this last illumination of the dimensions of the paradox pulls him out of the complexities of this reality and into "the harbors of the moon":<sup>3</sup>

Something else said, "Look at the moon, look up at the moon." A silvery whale, it slipped up from the clouds and was clear, coming to surface in a midnight sea, and I felt its pale call, princess of the dead, I would never be free of her, and then the most quiet of the voices saying, "You murdered. So you are in her cage. Now earn your release. Go around the parapet again," and this thought was so clear that I kept going down the third leg; and the wall came nearer to me; my limbs came alive again; each step I took, something good was coming in, I could do this, I knew I could do it now. There was the hint of when I would finally be done - some bliss from infancy moved through the lock of my lungs. (An American Dream, 260)





But Rojack cannot complete the ritual for he has "lain with madness long enough" (An American Dream, 260). He rids himself of the umbrella and flees to the vision of heaven in Harlem where Cherry lives. What he finds is the havoc wreaked by his own energy. The entrance to heaven has been blocked, for Cherry has suffered the consequences of Rojack's inability to "lay with madness" any longer. (The Devil fulfills the bargain.) He also finds that his spiritual father of evil has died - perhaps the man in Harlem whose death Rojack felt when the umbrella fell. Because Rojack cannot exist in the area of tension between God and the Devil he must free himself from the trap by escaping the depths of his mind. He must run to the "moon" in a desperate attempt to leave his inheritance of the "embattled vision." He attempts to leave God and the Devil on the parapet to work out their own destinies.

Rojack has come through the paradox without resolving it. He attempted to exorcise God with the umbrella and the power of Shago and only succeeded in renewing his vision of heaven. He attempted to move closer to God but found that he was, at the same time, animating the Devil. In the end, in his rejection of madness he does not find sanity. Instead he accepts the landscape of death through which he drives:

Living in this second atmosphere for twenty-three hours of the twenty-four - it was life in a submarine, life in the safety chambers of the moon. Nobody knew the deserts of the west, the arid empty wild blind deserts, were producing again a new breed of man. (An American Dream, 269)

Mailer has found his way through the labyrinth to



discover that what was once momentary glimpses of the power of evil as seen from the world of metaphor are now "eternal, immutable" symbols. The momentary visions of The Naked and the Dead have in An American Dream encompassed all existence in a vision of the reality and the end:

KENT. Is this the promised end?

EDGAR. Or image of that horror?

(King Lear, V, iii, 263-264.)





## CONCLUSION

Norman Mailer has led us to the moment in which man confronts the psychopathic nature of man, the holy and demonic nature of man. We have seen that analogies to the journey can be found in the myth of the labyrinth and in the theology of the word becoming flesh. But, in conclusion, let us examine yet another parallel to this process of growing awareness. Mailer, says Norman Podhoretz, "appears to be endowed with the capacity for seeing himself as a battleground of history. . . . To follow Mailer's career, therefore, is to witness a special drama of development, a drama in which the deepest consciousness of the post-war period has struggled to define itself."<sup>1</sup> This "struggle" is one in which Mailer as intellectual encounters Mailer, the prizefighter. It is a "struggle" in which Mailer as a man of words confronts Mailer as a man of action and, in the end, Mailer accepts the role of the writer as a means of containing both elements of his self. This new analogy, then, is one in which Mailer relieves the violent life of Jean-Paul Marat as interpreted by Peter Weiss in his play Marat-Sade. Marat proclaims in a way that Mailer might:





Simonne Simonne  
 my head's on fire  
 I can't breathe  
 There's a rioting mob inside me  
 Simonne  
 I am the Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Mailer, like Marat, embodies the violence and the turmoil of the Revolution and, at the same time, injects the idea of the revolution into the innocent minds of the citizens and readers. He is at once the germ of the revolution in society and the injector of the germ.

But Mailer is also a Sade figure and, as such, embodies a greater revolution. He is the Sade who calls to Marat:

Marat  
 these cells of the inner self  
 are worse than the deepest stone dungeon  
 and as long as they are locked  
 all your revolution remains  
 only a prison mutiny  
 to be put down  
 by corrupted fellow-prisoners.<sup>3</sup>

The only revolution is one which changes the nature of man. And this is an aspect of the subversion involved in Mailer's confrontation with the self. Again, like Mailer, Sade states:

In a criminal society  
 I dug the criminal out of myself  
 so I could understand<sub>4</sub> him and so understand  
 the times we live in.

Mailer is Marat-Sade. Mailer's theology is the theology of paradox in which God and the Devil are unity in the body of man. As a man Mailer embodies the "embattled vision." As a writer he encompasses all the elements of the idea of revolution. But the man and the writer are combined in a



courageous effort which leads him and those who follow to the edge of the abyss. Mailer's daring involves the great acceptance of the possible immorality of his duty. He must, in the end, confront the "new breed of man." He must confront the possibility that his revolution will not be perpetual. Like Sade he must be aware of what the revolution might lead to:

Although we've only just started  
 there's no passion in our post-revolutionary murders  
 Now they are all official  
 We condemn to death without emotion  
 and there's no singular personal death to be had  
 only an anonymous cheapened death  
 which we could dole out to entire nations  
 on a mathematical basis  
 until the time comes  
 for all life  
 to be extinguished.<sup>5</sup>





## FOOTNOTES

Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Eliot, "Dante," The Sacred Wood, 169.

<sup>2</sup>Steiner, "Naked but not Dead," Encounter, XVII, vi, 67.

<sup>3</sup>All quotations from Cannibals and Christians are from Dial Press edition, 1966. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>4</sup>Steiner, Language and Silence, 3-4.

Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Sarte, Saint Genet, 522.

<sup>2</sup>Steiner, Language and Silence, 99.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Duncan made this statement at the 1962 Vancouver Poetry Seminar while discussing the suicide of Hart Crane. It was quoted to me by Dr. E. Mandel.

<sup>4</sup>Sarte, Saint Genet, 522.

<sup>5</sup>Conrad, Lord Jim, 164.

<sup>6</sup>All quotations from The Deer Park are from the Signet edition, 1955. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>7</sup>Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, 14.

<sup>8</sup>All quotations from An American Dream are from the Dial Press edition, 1965. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>9</sup>Steiner, Language and Silence, 117.

<sup>10</sup>Burroughs, Naked Lunch, xxxvii.

<sup>11</sup>In 1984 Orwell presents us with a society which is bent on abolishing the orgasm and in which the act of sex is a political act, an act of rebellion against the state. The point is that thwarted sexuality is easily turned into the hate which the state channels for its own ends, particularly for the energy needed to continue perpetual war.





<sup>12</sup>All quotations from Advertisements for Myself are from the Signet edition, 1960. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>13</sup>Steiner, "Naked but not Dead," Encounter, XVII, vi, 68.

<sup>14</sup>All quotations from The Naked and the Dead are from the Signet edition, n.d. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>15</sup>Burroughs, Naked Lunch, 67.

<sup>16</sup>McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride, 145.

<sup>17</sup>Steiner, Language and Silence, 4-5.

## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>All quotations from Barbary Shore are from the Grosset & Dunlap edition, 1963. Notation in parenthesis refers to page number.

<sup>2</sup>Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 3.

<sup>3</sup>Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, 554.

<sup>4</sup>Laing, "The Politics of Experience," The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise, 16-17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 18.

## Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>Robbe-Grillet, as quoted by Marshall Fishwick in his essay, "Is American History a Happening?," Saturday Review (May 13, 1967), 19.

<sup>2</sup>This argument is supported by Norman Podhoretz in his essay, "Norman Mailer: The Embattled Vision," but he does not examine the relationship of the burden to Mailer's theory of Time.

<sup>3</sup>This argument finds support from no less a topographer than William Shakespeare:



'Fondling,' she saith, 'since I have hemm'd thee here  
 Within the circuit of this ivory pale,  
 I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer;  
 Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale:  
 Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,  
 Stray lower, where the pleasnt fountains lie.'  
 (Venus and Adonis, 229-234)

<sup>4</sup>Podhoretz, "Norman Mailer: The Embattled Vision,"  
 190.

#### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>Yeats, "Crazy Jane Talks With The Bishop," Selected Poetry, 161.

<sup>2</sup>The umbrella as a metaphor of the presence of God and the Devil seems to be related to the story of Aaron's rod and the serpent in Exodus of the Bible.

<sup>3</sup>The moon, of course, is an image which Mailer uses often in An American Dream. It is an image of the abyss. Rojack looks at the moon when he first confronts his self in the war during the encounter with the German soldiers. The moon is, again, a prominent image in Rojack's suicide attempt. The "harbors of the moon" is, then, an image of his new home on the edge of the abyss.

#### Conclusion

<sup>1</sup>Podhoretz, "Norman Mailer: The Embattled Vision,"  
 179.

<sup>2</sup>Weiss, Marat-Sade, 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 25-26.





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